

THE
CLAIMS OF LABOR,

AND

THEIR PRECEDENCE

TO THE

CLAIMS OF FREE TRADE.

BY

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THE CLAIMS OF LABOR.

THE interests of that immense majority of men who do not merely labor for their living, but whose industry and skill produce all that is called wealth, all the necessities, comforts, luxuries, and ornaments of civilized life, deserve to be studied directly and specially, and not merely as incidents of national wealth. No system of social economy can be trusted which suppresses or overlooks the duties which men owe to their fellow-men; and no system of social duties can for a moment be compared with that which was propounded by Him who gave the commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself!"

If the instances were not flagrant, it might be supposed that no Christian people could adopt or tolerate a system of political economy, of which human well-being was not at least the avowed object. The prevailing systems, however, take wealth for their subject, and, treating it under the special topics of production, distribution, and consumption, proceed to develop it mainly from a commercial point of view. The production of wealth is its appearance in the channels of commerce; that is supply: its distribution is commerce; its consumption is movement to the consumers; that is demand.

In fact, however, the producers and consumers are substantially the same. In a state of advanced civilization, the extreme division of labor makes it necessary to institute a system of exchange of products, which involves that complicated movement for the assortment of products which is called trade ; an agency which is not designed to promote the interests of that class of men called merchants, but to promote the comfort and well-being of all classes of society, especially that largest class, of which those who labor for a living are the members. This is the class which furnishes the producers and the chief part of the consumers. The point of view, then, from which to regard social industry, is not trade, but labor and social well-being. Trade is but one of the branches of this industry, a department which becomes more important as civilization advances, but can never be otherwise than subordinate to the interests of the great body of producers and consumers. Merchants form a necessary class, but their private interests prompt them to make the largest profits possible out of their agency. It is therefore assuming a false position to study the interests of those who produce by the light furnished by those who merely assort and distribute the commodities of industry.

Great armies are fed and clothed and all their wants supplied by the agencies of officers who receive a yearly salary for their services, and whose duty is to supply the place of merchants in civil life to soldiers engaged in duties which preclude them from attending to the purchase of their own clothing, or the providing for their own food. This is by far more economical for the soldier and the government than if this were left to the full action of a class of merchants, whose profits would

far exceed the salaries of the commissariat of an army. As it would be of no advantage to an army merely to increase the salaries of these commissaries; so it is no advantage to a community in civil life that the merchants by which it is served grow rich.

The real object to be sought in both cases is the larger and better supply of those articles which go to increase the comfort, health, and strength of consumers, whether soldiers or citizens; and, of course, in order to the increase of supplies, the attention must be chiefly directed to the laborers, by whose skill and industry the products of annual consumption are furnished; not forgetting for a moment that those laborers are not only the chief producers but the chief consumers. The great social problem is not merely the largest production, nor the freedom of the distribution, but that the laborers shall be enabled to enjoy adequately the fruits of their own industry.

We trust it will be a relief for the real friends of humanity to turn from the pages which treat of the production, distribution, and consumption of riches, to some considerations upon the welfare of the man who labors. Not that we intend to propound here any system, or to attempt more than to point out the claims of laborers and insist upon their being considered. When such considerations and inquiries are allowed due weight, and are carried to their proper conclusions under the light of Christianity, a system of social economy will be developed, which must do more to quicken the movements of industry and fill the channels of commerce than all the theories of wealth, or money, or commerce, or political economy, which have yet been announced.

The claims of labor! What a fruitful text! When we behold the mighty results of labor in agriculture, in manufacture, in the arts, in commerce, it is but just and natural to inquire where are they who have achieved all this? What is their condition, and what their prospects? Are they receiving, or have they received, a just remuneration for all this labor? Are they enjoying the reward of all they have done? Are they worn down with toil, or are they, with due mingling of rest and refreshment, the most cheerful, the most healthful, and the most grateful of God's creatures? It denotes a deadness to human interests wholly inexcusable to look upon the marvels of industry, and not give one kind or anxious thought to the condition of those whose bread depends day by day upon the progress of works which so justly command the wonder of the spectator. But, in truth, we should not need any spectacle of the results of human industry to excite us to a full consideration of the claims of the laborer. Man is wisely and mercifully appointed to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow.

We say mercifully, because the highest condition of the laboring man is the highest state of earthly happiness. Laborers whose physical powers are not unduly taxed, whose minds are properly cultivated, and whose labors are duly requited, are the happiest men of this world; seldom repining at their lot as they eat that food to which toil gives a relish the relaxed idler never feels. They escape a thousand ills and causes of discontent to which a life of opulence or even partial idleness is exposed. If the mass of laborers in the world do not enjoy the happiness and comfort which is due to their position and their services, it is because men have

changed and perverted the appointment of God. The laborer, in too many instances now, does not eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; he labors, but the avails come not to him; he toils far beyond the point of earning his bread, but another mainly enjoys the benefits. His bread is too scant for the requirements of nature; his labor is too hard for the powers of nature. This is no part of the sentence, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread, until thou return to the ground." It is man's perversion of God's appointment.

The claims of labor demand, then, earnest consideration. No subject which concerns social interests claims more conscientious and enlightened investigation. Labor is the power which rears the dwellings in which we live, the temples in which we worship, and every other triumph of architecture; which produces that infinite variety of food and raiment, of luxuries and necessities, in which we revel; which achieves all the wonder of art and mechanism; which builds all the mighty fabrics which float upon river and sea; which accomplishes all those vast works of canal and railway, daily bringing the various portions of the human family into closer proximity, and strengthening the feeling of human brotherhood; and indeed all that the eye beholds distinguishing civilized from savage life comes from the hands of labor.

Striking however as all these achievements of labor are, they fall far short of a full exhibition. Few persons whose attention has not specially been directed to the subject can make even a tolerable approximation of the quantity of labor required for the production of their own food, and the furnishing of their own raiment,

of their furniture, of their books, and the numberless items of expenditure in which their families annually indulge. Who that beholds our whole avenues of warehouses, stored with commodities from every part of the world, can conjecture the quantity of human labor required to fill depositories so numerous, and so vast? Who can conjecture the infinity of implements and machinery which were employed in the production of all these commodities, and the labor it required to construct and use them? But, what is far more interesting to know, who can tell what labors of the body and the mind, what exertions of human strength, what efforts of human limbs, what practice and skilful motions of the arm and hand, and what movements of human fingers, all directed by human intelligence and by the organs of the human senses, go to the filling the magazines of commerce and art? It is evident upon a slight examination that the quantity of human labor, the actual toil, the daily and annual expenditure of human exertion which is employed in this vast production, yearly repeated, is far beyond our computation. We can only say it is all the work of human beings under sentence of labor. And as we cannot compute the labor, nor ascertain the condition of the laborers by simply regarding the work they have done, we are compelled, in considering the claims of labor, to turn to the laborers themselves, wherever they are scattered over the face of the earth, to discover their actual position and prospects. We can find the woman who toils day by day in the yearly work of her needle, though we can never see nor trace the garments which yearly leave her hands. In the consideration of questions and topics touching the higher human interests, and especially those which con-

cern the multitudes who actually produce the commodities of the world, we must carry our own inquiries among them and not merely among their productions; we must look at the laborers, young and old, male and female, at their work and in their dwellings. If we would do them good, we must thoroughly comprehend their condition, moral, civil, and social, and the influences which combine to produce that condition. It is not a mere question of commerce nor of industrial production which comes before us when we would consider the claims of labor; it is a question of human rights, human interests, of human welfare, which demands our attention. Commerce and industry may make their proudest exhibitions and astonish beholders with the wonders of human effort, whilst the masses who contributed the work of their hands to swell this display, may be suffering the very extremities of human woe. The claims of labor, then, the great social question not only of our day, but of all time to come, must be solved as a question of human well-being, not as a question of trade, or of industrial production, or of political economy. It need not be feared that anything desirable, or honorable, or grand in commerce, or vast in production, or of real value to the human family, can suffer or be lost by improving the condition of those on whom all production and all commerce depends. The laborers who are better fed, more comfortably clad and lodged, more suitably and fully educated, whose moral or religious training has been more amply and carefully attended to, will certainly be none the less efficient in their industry, and their contributions to the mass of commodities in trade will be none the less abundant. It is altogether more safe, then, as well as more philo-

sophical and humane to promote the progress of industry and production, by increasing the comforts, the health, strength, intelligence, and general welfare of laborers, than by the indirect method of stimulating and encouraging commerce as a business or a profession. We need scarcely add, that regarded from the side of Christianity, there is no admissible mode of considering the subject but that which places human welfare as the chief corner-stone of every industrial edifice and the main element of all commercial prosperity.

There is another aspect in which the claims of labor are strikingly important. Labor earns, year by year, the entire income of a nation; not merely the public revenue out of which the whole expenditure of the nation is borne, but the private income, be the same more or less, of every individual who has other means of living than his own labor. The whole expense of political institutions, and national as well as sectional administration, is sustained by the annual labor of the masses. This affords, however, but an inadequate notion of the earnings of labor, for a true comprehension of which resort must be had to the gross products of national industry, rather than to the net proceeds of which public and private incomes mainly consist.

The entire annual product of labor in the United States is variously estimated at from \$3,000,000,000 to \$3,500,000,000; it may be safely taken at over \$3,000,000,000, which gives for our present population one hundred dollars for each individual. This is believed to be very near the actual annual consumption of our population. One-half of this consumption is of food, the other of raiment, furniture, and other necessities. Of this vast expenditure, about ninety dollars is expended for the products of domestic industry, and

ten dollars for foreign products by each individual, and taking the average of our whole population. Domestic industry, however, supplies the commodities which we export, to pay for the foreign articles we import, so that our own laborers furnish directly ninety per cent. of our whole consumption, and indirectly the other ten per cent. Our country is, therefore, a vast area of industry, in which the people are engaged in ministering to each other's wants and desires. The largest portion are engaged in agriculture, which furnishes food to all; nearly all the rest are employed in the various branches of mechanical and manufacturing industry, which furnish raiment, furniture, and lodging for all; the remainder, a comparatively small number, are engaged in the business of trade, domestic and foreign, thereby distributing for consumption the products of industry, and in professional and political life,—the labor of this smaller number being essential to organized society and civilized life. In our country, then, as in all others, the population consists mainly of laborers in the soil and in the shop or manufactory.

The men of trade, and politics, and professional life occupy the largest space in the eye of the casual observer, but dwindle into insignificance in point of numbers when compared with the others. Our view of labor and of laborers should cover the whole field of industry, and should include all its occupants. Labor is the basis of social life; the welfare of the laborer should be, therefore, a main object of social policy. To make this policy complete, it includes the labor of the mind as well as of the body, and also that division of employment and of labor which conduces to skill and increased production. It is from a view of these labo-

rers as a whole, that we must derive the policy which will best conduce to the social happiness of the whole. We cannot determine what will most promote the welfare of those engaged in trade by that which best suits the men of professional life. We cannot determine the best interests of agriculturists by consulting singly the wishes of the manufacturers; nor can we ascertain or promote the interests or welfare of the whole mass by consulting the men of trade and the interests of commerce. Each department has its separate interests and its selfish views. There is a policy, however, which is ✓ best for the whole, and that can neither be ascertained nor adjusted, but by giving that consideration to each class which belongs to the magnitude of its numbers, its peculiar position, and its special employment.

The eye of the Christian, of the statesman, of the legislator, of the philanthropist, should embrace the whole field of diversified labor, without losing sight of the various parts; the head should not forget nor neglect the feet, nor should the body discard the hands. All the members should abide together in peace and mutual confidence under their appointed guidance. The government of the whole, instituted for the good of the whole, is necessarily confined to the special nation or population under its direct supervision. There are principles which apply to the labor and the laborers of the whole world, but as the laws of each nation operate only within its boundaries, and as the rulers of each nation can only enforce their policy within these limits, the main object of government and social policy must be the care of labor and laborers in the circle within which special authority is effectual.

The authorities of each separate country having, to

the extent of their wisdom and abilities, provided for the special welfare of their own people, may then, in conjunction with the rulers of other nations, inquire what the separate governments may effect for the good of the family of nations. The inquiry must constantly ascend from particular nations to nations collectively. If the several nations of the world are well governed and happy, they will be quite ready to promote the happiness of the whole, as an additional means of increasing their own.

It is very obvious that the scene of labor which every industrious community presents, should be fully covered by the shield of law and social order. Civilization cannot exist where industry is exposed to the attacks of all who prefer a life of violence or fraud to one of useful labor. Men must be protected from each other; the various classes must also be protected from each other, and the whole must be subjected to such restraints as may be needful for the interests of all. Unrestrained liberty of action in what respects the progress of industry and the interchange of commodities, is no more safe nor wise than unrestrained liberty of action in reference to men's persons. It is as essential to a happy social system and a sound civilization that men should not defraud nor oppress each other in what concerns their property and the due compensation of their labor as in what concerns immunity of their persons. It is even more necessary to guard men's property and labor than their persons, for selfishness is a more universal and powerful motive than those which lead to attacks upon the persons of men. The mass of men suffer a hundred fold more injury from the selfishness of their fellow-men than they do from all other causes

combined. Whilst, therefore, the laws in their frame and administration should carefully protect the person of the laborer, they should no less sedulously have respect to the labor, to the occupation, to the compensation, and to the general welfare of the class of laborers, as being the most important and most numerous class in every nation. This duty of every government must by its very nature be special. No general law nor system can possibly suit for all nations. The diversities of people in their habits, industry, knowledge, aptness for invention, or execution, their actual condition, make it absolutely necessary that each nation should be governed according to its special circumstances, and with a view to its special welfare. The duty of watching over the interests of men who labor is therefore not only undoubted, but it should be faithfully performed in each separate nationality with reference to its people as the only means of fulfilling efficiently the most important end of social organization. If the productions of industry were of more importance than the men who produce them, there might be some excuse for overlooking the laborer in our zeal to promote production. The wisest policy, however, even in that view, would be to promote production by promoting the welfare of the producer, rather than by aiming at production as the chief object.

In surveying the field of industry, one of the first features which strikes our eyes is the real and apparent conflict of interest. Each individual and each class are interested to draw from others a larger portion of the avails of industry than they give. The professional man is disposed to place his daily labor or professional services at the highest rate he can. The officials of

government constantly struggle to put their salaries and fees at the highest point attainable. The capitalist strives to obtain a high rate for his capital. Men of skill and men of enterprise and large undertakings exert themselves to the same end; and the men of daily labor, on whom all the rest mainly depend, as constantly strive, though too frequently the prey of others, to secure the largest possible compensation for their toil. This seems to present a scene in which selfishness must reign supreme. And, in point of fact, its reign is under far less control than it should be; its victims in the best governed states are a host. To a certain extent, however, this selfishness and the spirit of competition which it generates may be needful as a stimulus to exertion, but when permitted too much control it is the bane of humanity, and one of the worst enemies of general welfare.

There is a point of justice among all these conflicting interests which it may be impossible strictly to define, or by any legislation to secure; but it may be approximated in both respects by a wise public administration. The exact adjustment of what is due from man to man in all that relates to mutual kindness and forbearance, belongs as well to the domain of morality and Christianity as to that of government. Public authority may, however, go far under the guidance of Christian principles to attain the great object of giving industry its utmost development by merely promoting the welfare of laborers.

In a scene of industry like that to which we refer, where there are so many parties, each attentive to their own interests, there must of course be some tendency in the struggle to adjust itself at the right place, as

each individual and each class in claiming what they conceive to be due to them as against others, is met by the very party against which the claim is made; and, of course, in a community where any sense of mutual justice or any control of Christianity prevailed, there would be found such a spirit of concession as must adjust many differences as nearly at the right point as is attainable. If each individual and each class were able to persevere equally in the assertion of their respective rights, the point of compromise would soon be found for all; but that is never the case. Many do not understand their own rights; some have little opportunity of insisting on them, and some have little capacity for the vindication of their interests, whilst many of superior opportunities and advantages in all these respects soon attain a superiority of position and power which rapidly places them far in advance of their less favored fellow-laborers. This tendency to inequality is unavoidable; it belongs to the very constitution of our race, in which inequality reigns in classes and individuals, from infancy to age, in mind and body. It is plain from this that our Creator, if He intended that peace and justice should prevail among men, did not place it upon the foundation of force or of mind or of mere human interests, all of which would tend to violence and disunion or fraud.

His plan is made known to us in Revelation. He has planted in men all the energies needful to a grand development of human prosperity, and He has given the law of love to soften, control, and modify these selfish energies and passions which incite men to activity. Christianity, therefore, casts over the whole field of human labor its benign regards; all classes of

the human family are alike the objects of its care. The law of kindness and love under which men are thus placed is sufficient for every human emergency; there can be no oppression, no undue advantage taken of weakness nor of ignorance, where a due regard for this law is entertained.

It is surely incumbent, then, upon all intelligent and influential Christians, and especially upon all the ministers of Christ, to examine and understand, as far as practicable, the applications of Christianity to this greatest of men's interests in this world,—the interests of labor, the mutual claims and relations of laborers. There is no safe nor final solution of the innumerable questions which arise in the great arena of industry but that which is found in Christianity.

No other doctrine, no other philosophy can reach the depths of the subject. Inequalities of mind, of body, of physical strength, and activity, as well as the events of human life and the course of nature, all conspire to produce inequalities of wealth among men. Such inequalities being unavoidable are like the dissimilarities in the external appearance of men, undoubtedly in the order of God's providence. The correction of this unequal distribution which arises from causes which cannot be changed, nor wholly controlled, is left to Christianity, acting upon human wisdom, and directing human affections, and shaping human institutions. Men variously endowed accumulate unequally, but having added field to field and heaped up treasures far beyond those by whom they are surrounded, these favored sons of fortune, as they are sometimes called, come under responsibilities proportioned to their acquisitions, and which they cannot avoid. The relations

created by riches and poverty and by the unequal natural endowments of men are provided for in the Christian system by the duties of charity, mercy, protection, advice, and brotherly kindness, and the continual interchange of good offices. The man of business may enlarge his possessions, but in so doing he becomes the more specially a steward of Him who permits this unequal distribution of wealth, and as such bound to employ his riches in the best manner he can for the welfare of his fellow-men. He that is rich, or wise, or powerful, or intelligent, having received these advantages from the Great Giver of every good gift, is bound to make the best use of the talents thus committed to his charge. There rests, therefore, upon all who are able to render any useful service to their fellow-men, a religious duty in this respect to be discharged to the utmost of their ability. To this obligation we appeal for the benefit of all who live by their labor and especially of those who, not being able to retain the whole avails of their labor, live upon the wages of labor. But this appeal is not only made to all employers as to a question of wages between them and their laborers, it is made to all men of power, wealth, wisdom, and intelligence, to urge upon them their responsibilities in reference to the compensation which is due to those who give the toil of their lives to the benefit of society. The problem for solution which arises out of the condition of those who must labor for a living is not merely what relief is to be provided for those who, from vice, improvidence, or accident, are precipitated into pauperism, it is, What is the system of law or of society which shall best secure an adequate reward to labor? What will form the best barrier to inroads of poverty and destitution?

Political expediency, the necessity of some degree of social order, even selfishness for its own sake, may dictate concessions and compromises among jarring interests, clashing claims, and opposing powers, but there can be no final adjustment and no principles of just discrimination settled where sheer force or temporary expediency are the only umpires. It is the law of love, of mercy, of meekness, humility, and brotherly kindness, as applied by Christianity to every possible relation and position of life, which can sufficiently discriminate in its intricacies and reach all the sinuosities of human condition; it alone is the oil which can diffuse itself over all the tumultuous and ever-varying sea of human life, calm its surges, and smooth its surface. In its abounding breadth it reaches every man and every class of men. It does not make equals of men; it does not reduce all to one level; but it is adapted to that state of mental and physical inequality in which men are everywhere found. There is, therefore, in human infirmities, in the accidents, calamities, and unhappy conditions of human life, and more especially among that larger portion of men of whom labor is the condition of their existence, a vast field for the exercise of all the graces which can adorn Christian character. It is so intended not merely for their sake to whom kindness is shown, but that those heavenly qualities and graces which emanate from Christianity may be cultivated to the utmost, for in this way only can spiritual life and energy be manifested, strengthened, and maintained by those who are largely endowed in this world. And after all it is highly probable that the highest attainments in spiritual life and purity are made by those who are denied the comforts of this life and spend their

days in suffering and patient endurance. On the part of the rich, and wise, and powerful, a life of active kindness and useful ministration is required; they are required to follow their Master's example in going about to do good. If the whole of the responsibilities of the rich were fully understood and realized, it would be no small consolation to the destitute and the suffering that they escape very many of the heavy cares which press upon those who are apparently more highly favored in this life.

There is, therefore, in Christianity an adjustment made by Infinite wisdom between the powerful and the weak, the wise and the simple, and the rich and poor, in reference to their respective duties and conditions; and this adjustment should be thoroughly studied in the Gospel by those whom it most concerns. There is not a position in social life to which the principles of this adjustment do not apply. The laborer can never be defrauded of his just compensation where these principles prevail; nor can he demand more than a just reward for his toil. The lender and the borrower, the buyer and the seller, are equally bound to respect these principles in their transactions; and so on through every class of life. It is an essential part of Christianity, of our daily religious duty thus to understand and apply the doctrines of our Saviour.

If Christians, then, be required to study carefully, and we may add religiously, the great problem of human labor, that is, what is due in social life to the men of toil who are the real support of civilization and social happiness, how are they to commence this study and in what direction are they to prosecute it. Whatever may be the best mode of entering upon this vast topic,

it must be important in the earliest stage of inquiry to ascertain what fallacies, prejudices, or mistakes now cloud our vision or lie in the path. We must get rid of these if we would attain a clearer view of the ground we are to traverse.

In this inquiry of what is due to the men who labor, we begin not as we have already said with the processes of industry, nor with the products of industry; we begin not with the processes of commerce nor with the principles of commerce. These belong to a more advanced stage of the investigation; they are but means to the end we have in view. We begin with the men of toil. It is mainly for their sake that the processes of industry are devised, and the products of industry brought forth; it is mainly for their sake that the distribution of commodities effected by trade is begun and carried on.

The labor which men undergo is for their own advantage: the object is not merely to swell the sum of human products, nor to gorge the channels of commerce; it is chiefly applied to the production of food, of raiment, of furniture, to the erection of dwellings, and to the production of articles of luxury and of art. If all this industry be for human benefit, then it should be for the benefit of those whose industry is thus employed; that is, the producers of all the articles referred to, after due compensation to all whose assistance they have required in the progress of their industry, after paying for the use of capital for professional aid, for the aid of science, for religious teaching, for the education of their children, and for the expenses of government, should have enough left for their own food, their own raiment; they should have houses and furniture,

and some share in the luxuries and works of art which their own hands have made. That this desirable end cannot be exactly and fully attained is very certain, for that would bring about that very equality which is clearly not in the order of Providence. But though this exact justice be unattainable, it is nevertheless the duty of men to aim at it. It is the duty of Christian men to be perfect, though it must ever be their lot to fall far short of perfection. The principle to be established is a fair apportionment of the avails of labor according to the share which each and all may have in the production; the end to be attained is the nearest approximation to that adjustment which is practicable, without violating other duties and principles of Christianity of equal validity and importance.

However averse many are from the discussion of this subject of social justice, and whatever apprehensions they may entertain of the influences of socialism or other false social theories, there can be no risk in approaching its consideration under the full light of Christianity. We can be in no danger of doing injustice to any class of men, so long as we are guided by that precept which enjoins us to love our neighbor as ourselves; an injunction equally binding on all classes, whatever the contrast of their condition. We must apply that and other Christian injunctions to the world as we find it, and to men as we find them, and in this application we must study and regard human nature in its developments, past and present. The obstacles to the attainment of strict social justice are innumerable, and belong chiefly to our sinful nature, and to the natural inequalities of men. Christians have erred far more in neglecting to discuss and present to the world the bearing

of Christianity upon social life, than the socialists and others have erred in attempting to frame theories and systems of social philosophy in which Christianity is not an adequate and avowed element. There is not an aspect in which the subject can be regarded, in which the light of Revelation is not needed for any complete elucidation.

Men are not born equal ; they do not grow to equality in physical or mental qualifications. No human training could produce an equality evidently not contemplated in the human constitution. Christianity is designed to preside over the very inequalities to which the human family is plainly appointed in this world ; and upon this many of its most solemn and impressive injunctions are founded. The strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the wise and the unwise, are placed side by side in this world, subject to the peculiar and appropriate duties arising under these conditions. Each must do good to the other as ability and opportunity permit. In no respect do the unequal positions of this life appear more glaring than in what pertains to labor, and in none is there greater need for the interposition of the guiding and ameliorating influences of Christianity. Some are born suitable only for subordinate positions, and seem only happy in them ; some are incapable of any successful application of their labor except under the guidance and control of others ; some are so little disposed to obey the requirements of labor, that they need to be continually urged, if not compelled, to that duty. Without the social arrangements adapted to these facts and to the circumstances to which they give rise, civilization cannot exist. Industry is indispensable to abundance ; plenty is indis-

pensable to civilization ; Christianity is indispensable to restrain and regulate the social conduct and mutual relations of civilized life. The masses who labor under established social and political arrangements, are like horses saddled and bridled or harnessed for work ; the harness and the bridle may be needful for the work and for his hand who guides, but Christianity alone adequately teaches the mutual duties of the driver and the driven, of him who directs and him who executes, of the governor and the governed. It is then an indispensable obligation of Christians, as civilization advances and industry progresses, to develop the bearing of Christianity upon the new order of things, and the new relations which spring up. It is indispensable that the masses should ever in their varying positions be under Christian safeguards, under the protection of the great law of Christian charity. If Christian brethren are over them, they should always experience the benefits of the relationship, and whatever the severity of the toil to which they are doomed, they should never cease to be treated with kindness, not merely as the most important members of the social body, but as brethren of the same Christian family.

In the complications of social and political institutions, it may be very difficult to point out the bearings of the great law of kindness upon the conduct and mutual relations of men, but this difficulty by no means discharges us from a duty, which can only become easy by habitual regard to the subject, and an habitual performance of its requirements. If the obligation to love our fellow-men as ourselves be allowed its whole scope, it must soon be perceived that a special duty will rest upon all who are capable of discharging it, that of

thoroughly studying social philosophy, social and political institutions, and their influences upon human welfare. Men cannot otherwise ascertain how they can best promote human interests. The question of what is to be done for a single pauper is frequently so difficult as to create hesitation, but the more complicated and important question continually meets the Christian, whether he considers it or not, what is to be done for the million? It is no excuse for want of interest or consideration that a million of human beings, and not merely one, demand the exercise of our intelligence and all the help we can give them. We may give effectual help to one, but to millions sunk in the depths of want, we can give no other aid than to apply ourselves to the study of those problems of social life, upon the solution of which the remedies for poverty and social suffering must depend. No conceivable duty of the intelligent Christian can be of higher obligation than that which directs his attention to topics, in which the present as well as the future welfare of millions of his fellow-creatures are involved. It must be a mistaken notion that Christians have nothing to do with politics. No assertion can be more unfounded, or of more pernicious tendency. Christians are everywhere submissive to constituted authority, but should not be anywhere indifferent as to the choice of these authorities, or how they exercise their power. Christians having nothing to do with governments, in their collective or ecclesiastical capacity, are bound in their individual capacities to use their influence and power to the utmost extent for the promotion of human welfare. Christianity exerts thus its beneficent power in national affairs through individuals, who, if Christians indeed,

or even merely friends of Christianity, must carry some of its principles with them into every institution, political or social, in which they move. If the people of a country are Christians, they cannot but exhibit some of the aspects of Christianity in the policy and administration of their government. It is the mode in which they can most effectually perform the part of the good Samaritan. This involves, then, we repeat it, a deep and earnest study of social and political questions, and of the whole range of practical legislation. It involves a persevering and enlightened effort for social amelioration, greater than has yet been undertaken.

In such an effort, the first consideration being the man, the laborer, his welfare is the first object to be secured, and that is to be secured through his labor. He should be compensated in the way which is best for him, and whether freeman or slave, the employer or master cannot escape the obligation to deal justly with his laborer, and to do the best he can for him. It is often in the power of the master to afford a better compensation than the mere employer. The slaves belong to the family; they are of the master's household; his care of them should be patriarchal or parental. It is in this aspect that the relation of master and man has been neglected. The master in most cases is bound to do better for his people than to turn them adrift; he is bound to train them to piety, to industry, self-control, and finally liberty. But what the master owes to the slave is not less due from the employer, and from society itself to the free laborer. The virtual slavery of the workshop or the factory may be more galling, if not more fatal to the man, than the actual slavery of the plantation. Where the interests of humanity are con-

cerned, we must regard realities, and not merely the names of things. We should search the deepest recesses of society to see if men are not suffering there, if they are receiving a full compensation for their labor, if the opportunity of labor is not withheld, if they are not oppressed and crushed by circumstances they cannot control. Those who occupy the favored positions of life cannot acquit themselves before God if they do not honestly and faithfully make this inquisition. If they love their neighbor they will do it; if they obey the Divine precept they must look after and care for their fellow-men. They must be careful that the worst and most hopeless kind of slavery is not imposed upon those who labor for their daily bread,—the slavery of circumstances, the slavery of institutions, of social customs and influences, the slavery in which he that toils is governed by the unrelaxing hand of stern necessity, having no single master interested in his welfare or watching over him. Slaves of this kind are taught by bitter experience how much harder frequently is the lot of him whom society enslaves, than of him who is exposed only to the caprices of a single person, deeply interested in preserving his strength, his health, and his life.

There is perhaps no greater source of mistake and misapprehension in the study of human condition and human interests than that which is committed by the disproportionate attention given to what occurs or is presented in the large cities of the world. These are marts of trade or agencies in the business of foreign trade. Such are the great agencies of London and Liverpool, Paris and New York. Vast multitudes congregate in them, and a mighty business is there

concentrated. But these multitudes bear but a small proportion to those whose business they transact, and their whole agency, though vast, is small in comparison with the value of the productions of the country in which they are situate. Their business appears immense only, because, being exhibited on a small stage, it is more visible to the eye. The whole foreign trade of any country seldom exceeds ten per cent. of the value of its domestic productions, and only in a few countries exceeds five per cent., whilst in many rich countries it is far less. What is imported from abroad must be paid for by what is produced at home. It is not to these great marts, whatever other lessons of social wisdom we may learn from them, that we are to look for the solution of the great problems of labor. The proper reform of our social and political institutions, in reference to the interests of laborers, would undoubtedly carry with it many changes in these great commercial agencies, in which princely merchants too often gild a surface beneath which are impoverished multitudes. The wealth which is amassed in such commercial cities consists mainly of charges levied upon goods as they pass from the hands of the laborer to the hands of the consumer. It is not by increasing the quantity of goods exposed to this heavy taxation that we can favor the laborer. The great mass of men being producers, and all men being consumers, the less expensive the agency by which the interchange is made the better for all. The success of merchants may be the ruin of laborers; but the prosperity and increased activity of laborers must increase the business of merchants. The first care of the nation to give free scope to the industry of its masses being fulfilled, the agencies for distri-

bution will not linger behind the need of them. The business of the merchant is one for which men have shown in all ages great predilection. It is a profession celebrated for its wealth, intelligence, enterprise, and generosity. Its profits, however, were never anything else than charges upon industry. Men endowed with more than usual quickness of perception, energy, enterprise, or affected with greater ambition or desire of gain, have always been ready to embark by preference in a pursuit in which their business was not to live by their own labor so much as by the labor of others, in which the opportunities of exacting large profits were so much more frequent than in the more confined pursuits of industrial production. It is not by promoting commerce, that is by increasing the number of merchants who live upon the industry of others, nor by increasing the weight of the charges which are thus levied upon the products of industry, nor even by enlarging the quantity of merchandise exposed to this heavy tribute, that the interests of the laboring masses are to be secured. Whatever the necessity and the advantage of trade and great commercial agencies, their very existence is subservient to that labor and to that production which gives occasion for them. We make a great, a fatal, but too frequent mistake when our speculations, our social systems, and our legislation are shaped in reference to the interests of commerce, in place of the interests and welfare of those hosts of laborers who send forth not only the productions which are so conspicuous in the channels of foreign trade, but also those tenfold greater quantities of products which swell the sum of domestic trade and consumption. We must begin with the principals, and not with the

agents, if we hope to attain any reasonable accuracy in our conclusions. Having provided for the producer, we may then proceed to the consideration of those agencies and classes of laborers whose business follows and arises out of the former; and so proceed until our survey of society is complete. We thus commence the social structure with the foundation, and proceed regularly upward until the whole is complete.

The picture of a great free trade among the nations of the earth, in which each exchanges its respective or peculiar products for those of others without unfriendly restraint or restriction of any kind, captivates many minds. This picture is an illusion which has no sufficient foundation in the realities of life. It is certainly an attractive way of treating the subject, but it furnishes no basis for a system of political or industrial economy. On the average, not more than five per cent. of the wants of any people can be supplied by foreign trade. The other ninety-five must then be the product of home industry. The chief care of the nation should be the producers of this ninety-five per cent. of the articles of home consumption. Their welfare being well assured, their production would increase, and the interchange among them, by which this ninety-five per cent. is distributed, would be quickened and enlarged. The real power, wealth, and comfort of a people must be found in the consumption of their domestic products. Very few nations are so situated as to import from abroad any considerable portion of their entire consumption; either they have no means of paying, or they cannot afford to pay the expenses of transportation. Thus foreign trade is subject to a limit which it can never overstep, and that limit will ever bear a small proportion to the whole wants of a people.

In the United States, the entire annual consumption of goods manufactured and used for raiment considerably exceeds one thousand million dollars. Now, however cheaply such goods are made abroad, we can neither purchase, transport, nor pay for half that quantity. Our imports of such merchandise have not hitherto exceeded ten per cent. of our consumption. Those who are dependent on foreign nations for such supplies can consume only what their exports will pay for, whilst those who depend on home industry for their clothing may consume all they can manufacture. Home industry consults home wants, and fully supplies them by what is equivalent to an interchange of labor. The labor of a nation cannot produce any considerable excess beyond what is required for the wants, comforts, and enjoyments of its people. An exchange of commodities within a nation founded on the consumption of the products of its labor, may proceed to the full productive capacity of the people, and at the least loss in transportation and other charges. This consumption will not in the least be diminished by apparent high prices established among themselves, because these prices are their own scale by which to value labor. All are paid according to this scale, and none can justly complain. Above all, none should strive to enjoy these high rates for what they receive, and be unwilling to pay them for what they consume. ✓

The picture then which we should first desire to see is not that of foreign commerce, grand and imposing in its exhibition, though representing such a small proportion of the industry of any country, but that which presents the millions of homes filled with industrious people, fully employed in ministering to their mutual

wants, and enjoying a full share of the products or rewards of their own labor. The industry of a people developed upon the principle of supplying their own wants first will not fail in the end to contribute even more largely than others to that international commerce which deserves all the favor which is claimed for it, when it grows out of the industry of a well-fed, well-clad, and well-educated people, and is not put forward as the chief end of industrial effort, the criterion of national happiness, and the very basis of political economy.

The nation that depends upon foreign trade for its progress in the physical well-being of its people, must tax its laborers to produce goods lower than all the world beside. If successful in this, the utmost that can be expected is the enriching of a very small class of merchants, and the utter impoverishment of a mighty mass of toiling men. The nation whose policy is not chiefly to manufacture for its own people may build large and rich cities, but the bulk of its people must shiver and starve, and suffer what can only be conceived by those who have seen the victims of this exclusive devotion to the interests of commerce.

Many of the leading works upon Political Economy treat labor merely as a productive agent, as the power which produces the wealth of the world; the nature of that power as the agency of a moral and intellectual being is but little considered. So far therefore as most of the propositions and reasonings of political economy go, they may be regarded as not distinguishing the labor of man from that of beasts, or that of machinery. Political economists do not absolutely discard the laboring man from their systems; they merely discard his

advantage as a *governing* principle or element in their deductions. They pay small regard to moral considerations in their treatment of the subject of wealth. Even when they treat of labor, their first step, instead of towards the laborer, is into the product of industry, and thence into trade, distribution, consumption, and other like abstractions.

This first step is, unfortunately for the science of political economy, in the wrong direction; it is a step from man: it should be a step towards or with him. The inquirer by this first step having deserted the sole ground of human advantage, is embarked upon a sea of abstractions. The first inquiries should have been, Who is the laborer? What is his condition? What is the labor for? its object and its end? Man is the laborer. He is a creature of God, under whose government and laws he is placed, and by one of these laws he is appointed to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Another of these laws equally obligatory binds him "to love his neighbor as himself." This love is the bond of society, and society is made a necessity by the very constitution of man. The helplessness of infancy extending to the third of his years; the feebleness of an old age consuming another third, leaves to man but a few short years of the prime of manhood. And these: to what interruptions of disease and accident are they exposed! Man is endowed with wonderful powers, both physical and mental, and yet how difficult to conceive of a creature more dependent! The law of God, the providence of God, and everything in the constitution and the position of man in this world goes to prove him a dependent creature. Men are mutually dependent for earthly happiness to a de-

gree that cannot be over estimated. Their labor is greatly affected and controlled by this mutual dependence under all circumstances of society; the precise extent of which control can only be defined and adjusted by moral and religious considerations. But whilst human labor would always be thus subject to the claims for succor arising from this condition of mutual dependence, it must also, as between man and man, be subject to the laws of justice. Under the protection of justice springs up the right of private property, which, while it is absolute as a matter of right between men, is not free from the moral claims which may be made upon it under the great law of mutual succor. These elements being placed, we may safely proceed to the consideration of labor as a productive power. Its sole object is human advantage. Every laborer in the first instance would be entitled to the whole avails of his own labor. In process of time this is reduced by what the laborer gives for protection and guidance, and what he gives under the influence of moral or religious consideration for the aid of others; and there can be no other valid claim upon men's labor, unless it be of their own making. In the origin of society labor is the only valuable which men possess. It is first employed in providing for their own immediate wants and the wants of those immediately dependent upon them. It is next employed in producing something to exchange for the products of others, thereby to obtain additional comforts from others. This exchange may increase in importance to the parties and in quantity of products until some agency is necessary to carry it on, and a class of laborers become devoted to the task of receiving, transporting, and distributing to consumers. As

each man is limited in the amount he can purchase by the amount he can sell, so are all the men of a community limited ; and the quantity of products disposed of by all is the precise measure of what is to be received by all. In this exchange of the products of industry, it is but mere justice that the terms should be equal, and that all should receive a fair remuneration for their own labor in the labor of others ; proper discrimination being made in favor of special skill, taste, and inventive powers. Where men have any power to exact what they regard as a just compensation for labor, there will soon be some average rate by which all valuations will have a tendency to be fixed. In any circle of laborers, however large, it must be soon ascertained what rate of labor will enable laborers to live comfortably, and beyond the suffering condition of poverty. This rate will be that which must regulate the exchangeable value of the products of labor, because each producer will strive to obtain for his productions other articles which have cost as much of the labor of others. The tendency of these operations would be to exchange the products of equal quantities of labor, and this would in the main be the course of justice between the parties, subject, however, to many variations and interruptions.

Whatever advantages of fortune, or of skill, or of accident, or whatever endowments, physical or mental, may be possessed by some over others, the bulk of every population must ever remain laborers. The more of the favored who are exempt from the necessity of toil, the more strictly must the remainder be bound to that labor which yields the sustenance, necessaries, and luxuries of all.

The power of labor in any country is the grand item of its wealth ; it is a power upon which the country is absolutely dependent ; it is a power which insures public and individual prosperity when in full vigor, and corresponding poverty and debility when it is left to languish. If to the productive labor of a country its people owe all their wealth, all their enjoyments, all their food and raiment, all their luxuries and necessities, and all their progress in material well-being, should not that labor and its rewards be an object of special study and consideration ? The laborers are men, men who chiefly “constitute the state ;” men who are equally candidates for comfort and for heaven with the highest in the land. Can any subject of legislative action be for an instant put in comparison with this ? Can any wisdom, device, or skill of government be directed to a happier or better purpose than that of adding to the efficiency of human labor, and to the productive power and wealth of a nation, by increasing the sum of general happiness and intelligence, thus making every individual man a more efficient contributor to his own comfort and to the common weal ? The problem of labor cannot fail of finding its solution when approached by a direct consideration of the condition of men, of their necessities, their desires, their capacities, their moral and physical well-being, and their obligations to God and to each other. Such is the nature of the elements from which any sound and stable system of social economy must be developed ; and any system built on other foundations must lead to confusion of ideas in its progress, and to unsafe or false conclusions in the end.

If we glance at those stages by which society in the

civilized world has arrived at its present condition, we find that the same elements were required for the solution of the problem of human well-being ; complicated as it now is by an infinity of facts and questions, which time, ancient institutions, false teaching, and modern prejudices have fastened upon it, no other solution can be satisfactory. Human labor is becoming more and more important as an item in national wealth and individual welfare ; the life of man is of higher value than formerly, and considerations of humanity have risen higher than ever. It is now clearly impossible to solve the problem of human progress in happiness and prosperity without a solution of the problem of labor. We cannot tell what is due to humanity, until we have settled what is due to labor, or what is due to that vast array of laborers who carry forward the world in all its physical and material progress, and whose labor creates what is indispensable for the daily life of every nation.

When the evils of society become severe or intolerable to masses of men, reformers often appear who would remedy all that is wrong by destroying or endangering all that is good ; by upturning the whole fabric of existing systems, whilst the friends of order remain stupidly unprepared with plans of amelioration or even a remedial suggestion. Their philosophy consists in glorifying the past and the present ; their energy consists in standing still ; and their words to the suffering are, Bear and forbear, the evils of which you complain are either the consequence of your own conduct, or they are inevitable and incurable. In reference to such questions, there is far more energy and talent expended in opposing inquiry and sustaining error, than might suffice to ascertain the truth ; for the

fear of change seems far stronger and more prevalent than the love of truth. If the truth, however, were only looked in the face, her benign features would rapidly dissipate the apprehensions which, in reference to social questions, so torment the timid ; for though it might demonstrate that certain changes were necessary, it would not cease to be true that one evil must not be cured by perpetrating another. The consideration of the reforms which are needed, involves also the consideration of the manner in which they are to be effected. Remedies can only be prudently applied when the disease is understood ; but we should not refuse to study the disease, because possibly the remedy might prove to be of difficult application by those who are to administer it, or unpalatable to those to whom it is to be administered.

Political economy has, however, its remedy for the ills of industry ; it offers a specific for these mighty mischiefs. It offers the principle, so celebrated under the phrase, *laissez faire et laissez passer*. This is broad enough, it is insisted, to cover the whole ground of the evils under which labor suffers. But political economy as a science sternly rejects moral considerations, does not know humanity nor recognize Christianity. The remedy proposed is not, therefore, exhibited with any view to ameliorate the lot of the laboring man or the laboring masses, but with a view to the interests of commerce. The doctrine of *laissez faire et laissez passer*, or the let-alone principle, is that, if commerce prospers labor must prosper ; that if every man is left in the matter of production and trade to pursue his own inclinations unfettered, he will follow the path most for his own benefit, and by doing so, promote in the highest

degree the interest of his country, for that which is best for each one must in the aggregate be best for all.

There is truth enough in these positions to give them a degree of plausibility; but no doctrine can be more unsound than this as it is attempted to be applied. The liberty of the subject is likewise a favorite phrase and may be taken in a sense not in the least objectionable. Liberty is of inestimable value to every individual in society, and the law is exceedingly jealous of every attempt at its invasion. Yet whilst a free government guarantees all possible liberty, it restrains that liberty in a thousand ways from becoming injurious or offensive. It does not permit men, however injured, to take redress into their own hands, nor does it permit the commission of a thousand offences which unrestrained liberty prompts men to commit. Liberty is the rule indeed, but the exceptions are so numerous as quite to change its aspect and form a grand mass of restraints. Liberty is the rule in reference to all free governments; yet nearly all constitutions and laws are but the forms of those restrictions of personal liberty to which individuals submit, for their own benefit and the general good of a whole community.

Unrestrained liberty is the principle of savage life; that of civilized life is the due restraint of individual freedom. The principle of liberty pushed too far in reference to the institutions of civilization dissolves the whole fabric and carries people back to barbarism. But this is not more true in reference to those rights which relate to the inviolability of the person than in reference to property and labor. Regulation is as necessary for the protection of men's property or labor as of their persons; men should no more be permitted to take re-

dress into their own hands in the matter of their estates than in the matter of their persons. Both persons and property are necessarily placed under the restraints, regulations, and protection of public law, which bears or ought to bear equally upon all. The let-alone principle of political economy if pursued to its logical consequences would loosen, if not wholly dissolve, all these ligatures of civilized society. It may be said the doctrine does not refer to the right of protecting persons from injury or property from pillage, but to the right of men to be guided by their own inclinations, and to follow their own judgments in the manner¹ of accumulating riches. Let there be free trade, they say; let merchants be unrestrained in their operations, and the result will be happy for all. A very slight examination will show that this principle fully carried out is as dangerous to human welfare as any the laws are employed to combat. There is no career in which men show more selfishness and a more constant disposition to trample upon the rights of others than in the acquisition of wealth. There are ten men who will take advantage of their neighbor in a matter of business, or exact an inordinate profit, for one who will actually steal, or murder, or maim. The vast superiority of some men over others in both mental and physical energies, together with innumerable other causes, gives them a power over their fellow-men which they are under continual temptation to abuse. To deny that such power would be obtained, and to contend that if obtained it would not be abused, is to deny the history of the past and to shut our eyes to the most prominent traits of human nature.

To open any avenue to wealth, or power, or pros-

perity, and leave it without restraint or regulation, is no boon to the mass of men; all the advantages thus offered to the public will be seized and monopolized by the few who possess natural or accidental advantages. If the trade of the world were free, as it could be made by the repeal of all laws and regulations, it would very speedily be usurped by a few countries, and monopolized in a large degree by comparatively few in those countries. It would soon be found that trade, instead of being under the regulation of public law, would be under the control of private selfishness. Trade was only made general when it became the object of restrictive legislation. Before the reign of navigation laws and tariffs the trade of the world was confined to one or two countries at a time, and in them to a small number of merchant princes and their immediate dependents. Free trade might be an advantage to the hundreds; to the millions it would prove in the end only a worse slavery. Freedom from legal restraints does not always confer freedom of action. How many of the toiling millions in civilized countries could have their choice of a career in life if all legal restraints were removed? Can those who but barely obtain enough to keep up the current of life step at will into another and better mode of livelihood? Can the tenants of the poorhouse or the factory betake themselves at will to the pursuits of free trade? Surely something is due to the millions who labor beyond the advantages which free trade offers of manufacturing for the world at prices they have no agency in fixing, a trade in which they can never participate, a liberty of doing as they please of which they are not in a condition to avail themselves. The problem of social economy is not so simple that it can thus

easily be disposed of, nor should its proper solution be so empty a favor to the multitude as the utmost benefit which free trade could confer.

The right of doing as every one pleases, which is included in free trade, is not then a sound social principle, because it is a right which can inure only to a few ; it is in fact the principle of savage rather than of civilized life. We speak of it as an elementary principle ; for though it be utterly unsafe to develop any social system from such a principle, it may be indispensable to keep it constantly in view, whilst development proceeds from those elements which secure justice to all and the greatest practical happiness to the masses. Once the mind of the ingenuous inquirer is upon the track, it requires very little examination to perceive that the social interests of the laboring masses can never be ascertained nor pointed out, by regarding them from the point of Free Trade among nations. That is a point so far from the true starting-place of the inquiry, that the very question to be settled is not proposed nor indicated by it. Human welfare is forgotten by those who become thoroughly involved in questions about commerce, and credit, and money, and the more especially when they believe that these subjects are susceptible of scientific treatment, without reference to the interests of men whom alone they concern. Precisely a similar error is committed by the chief writers on money and institutions of credit. These subjects are treated too independently, and with too little reference to their being mere agents of commerce. There can be no science of money or currency as a distinct department of political economy, because the employment of money is wholly involved in the processes of trade, which, when fully

explained, reveal the use and theory of money. So neither can the subjects of labor, production, trade, consumption, distribution, nor capital, &c., be reduced into the form of science or expressed in the way of theory, without considering them all in connection with and in subserviency to the interests of the human family. Not merely the interests of those happy few who may be able by advantages of fortune, or of person, or of talents, or of position, to draw to themselves the largest portion of the benefit, but the interests of as many as it is possible to include within the scope of our conclusions. However impracticable it may be to raise the multitudes of any country to that degree of comfort and social happiness to which they may have an equal right, but which they are not fitted to assert, secure, or sustain, we are by no means excused from yielding them all the social good they are capable of receiving, and we have it in our power to bestow. In no sense is it permissible to regard laborers as merely the machinery which produces the commodities of trade, but least of all, in an elementary and theoretical sense, because by so doing, we do the laborer vast injustice without being aware of it. We cannot regard laborers merely as that mass of labor from which we are to obtain the largest quantity of products at the least possible expense. We cannot, we must not for a moment forget that the main object of that labor is to provide the highest practicable degree of well-being for the laborer himself; that the first consideration is the man who labors, next the product, next the value of the product, next the mode of exchanging it for what the laborer wants, and then of markets, merchants, and trade, domestic and foreign. We do not

forget in this that the employer and his laborers must, in the first instance, be taken as one. Their interests must be consulted first together, and then separately.

It is broadly laid down in books, received as authority by many both in church and state, and taught in our colleges, that if trade were made free, and every man allowed unrestrained liberty in his commercial dealings, everything must come right in reference to industry. But in this view, industry is contemplated only as a productive power, which might to some extent be stimulated by free trade. It is not, however, the quantity of products which a people send forth which determines their welfare; it is the quantity of products which they consume, and the whole power of industry can only be fully realized by that policy which promotes its productiveness, by fully rewarding the producer. Trade may flourish whilst those who fill its channels with merchandise are starving. Trade often flourishes most when it pays the laborer least, and when it charges the consumer the highest rates which can be wrung from him. Trade prospers by purchasing at prices so low as to be wholly unremunerating to the producer, and in sales at prices so high as to rob the consumer. This is its tendency, and there is no business in life in which selfishness has fairer opportunities of indulging its most ravenous propensities. It cannot be, that giving a free rein to this tendency can prove any boon to those who toil for a living. We protest, then, earnestly against this great error of determining the interests of the men of industry by the interests of the men of trade. Nothing can be more certain than that the welfare of the masses of any country must be determined mainly upon elements peculiar to the coun-

try itself. As the foreign trade of any country is of small account in comparison with its whole industry, it is but a single element in the consideration of what is due to domestic labor; let it not then be made the exclusive criterion. The idea that the rates of compensation for labor can be reduced to one standard throughout the world, implies a change which may not be effected in centuries, and is at this day an absurdity too great to be contemplated with any patience, and yet this practically is one of the tendencies, if not the aim of free trade. If a nation manufactures ninety per cent. of its consumption, the prices of that portion of domestic products is, by this system, to be regulated by the ten per cent. which is imported from those countries where the purchase could be made cheapest, and where, for the most part, the compensation of the laborer is least. Now whatever advantage this cheap purchase may be to the few who consume foreign products, it is greatly overborne by the misery entailed upon domestic producers, by compelling them to reduce their scale of living to that of the ill-paid foreign laborer. Low prices, in themselves, are no boon in any country. 'The real object is plenty of labor and a fair exchange of products.' If the people of Massachusetts can purchase flour from those of Pennsylvania, at a rate so low as to leave no profit to those who produce it, that is of no advantage to either State, for the people of Pennsylvania will consume so much less of the manufactures of Massachusetts. What is for the real advantage of each is, that the laborers in each should exchange their products at such rates, in proportion to their cost in labor and skill, as will enable them respectively to consume the largest quantity of each

other's products. The question must still be asked, not what an individual laborer has produced, or what a whole people has produced, but what has the man or the nation enjoyed? The largest producers may be and often are, under the practical workings of this system, the greatest sufferers.

Purchasing in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest are undoubted dogmas of free trade; and yet the transaction may consist in purchasing from those whom calamity or poverty has reduced to the necessity of parting with the products of their labor upon any ruinous terms the purchaser proposes, and selling in the dearest market may consist in selling at enormously high rates to those who are compelled to submit to any demand the seller may make. Such transactions are unobjectionable in the light of the received political economy; they are a legitimate result of free trade. They may, however, be of such a moral character as to surpass larceny or robbery in evil consequences. It not unfrequently happens that buyers combine on a large scale to reduce those who sell to that condition which enables them to dictate the terms of purchase; and sellers in like manner combine to reduce buyers to this state of dependence. These purchasers and sellers are, however, in the great transactions of trade the same persons. In all this, merchants may be acting only in the true spirit of commerce; they are merely buying as cheap as they can, selling as dear as they can, and making as much profit as they can. This spirit of trade is but the natural dictate of selfishness placed in positions in which it can prey upon the industry of those who are unable to protect themselves.

If the policy of a country is such that its laborers

may be duly rewarded and yet they are not, a question must arise between the employer and employed, and however delicate or difficult the interference might be, it cannot fairly be denied that some intervention should take place. It may be both impracticable and impolitic for any government to define the wages of labor; but it should not shrink from whatever scrutiny, or whatever measure may be needful to save the laborer from that oppression to which he is peculiarly exposed, the oppression of being compelled to give his labor for the barest subsistence, while the products of that labor yield a large profit to the employer. It is this kind of oppression which reduces millions of men in the world to a condition worse than slavery, because it exacts far harder work and gives a far less return. It is worse than the bondage of the slave without the sympathy or at least interested care of a master. At the present day there is no example of a civilized community, in which, if slavery prevails, the master is not punishable for excessive cruelty to his slaves. Now, no cruelty to slaves can exceed that social cruelty which starves the laborer and reduces him to the abject destitution of a pauper. It is no remedy for such cases that free laborers may leave when they are unjustly treated; that is a remedy for a few, but not within the power of multitudes. Those who have families, and many who have not, cannot change their residence without expense, for which they are not prepared, and without great risk; in most cases they cannot change at all, but must submit to any terms imposed. It is, therefore, as just, as necessary, as expedient, and socially as politic, to intervene between the employer and his dependents as in any case of justice between man and man. It is so-

cially as necessary, as proper, to protect the labor of the man who has no other possession, as it is to shield the property and capital of employers. As to the mode of intervention: that is one of the great questions which await the solution of the wise and prudent, but it is a question from which at least Christian wisdom and love should not shrink, because Socialists, Communists, Utopists or enthusiasts, have by their false speculations cast discredit upon the inquiry. If these reformers have wholly failed in solving the great problems of labor, it does not follow that there are no questions to solve, and that there is no consideration due to the subject. And if these mistaken reformers have wholly failed, if they have misled multitudes not capable of detecting the fallacies of their teachings, it does not follow that nothing is due to them and their deluded followers in the way of furnishing them a better philosophy, safer elements for reasoning, and sounder conclusions. They are neither lovers of truth nor safe guides in philosophy who refuse to enter upon a difficult subject because errorists have attempted it before them. Neither are those safer or more trustworthy who, assuming that human society has reached its highest point of perfection, refuse to stir in the path of amelioration, than those who rush onward to reforms which peril all that is good in the present without giving any reasonable assurance of what is better in the future.

Indispensable as commerce is to the progress and success of industry, and nobly as individual merchants may have resisted the temptations of their position as intermediates between laborers and consumers, and whatever may be said of placing such power unre-

stricted in human hands, yet surely the theory of this power cannot be the theory of industry and human welfare. It must be a fatal mistake, a grievous fallacy to exalt the theory of the interests of merchants into a social philosophy, and thus make all other interests subordinate to those of commerce. The object of society is not commerce; it is not even production. These are means and not ends. It would be as wise to found the whole science of the physician on a knowledge of the drugs he employs, without any consideration of the human system, to which it is alone applicable, as to construct a social system upon the processes of trade or industry, without taking into account their object. It is needful not only to ascertain what is truth, but to place our truths and facts in their proper order, that we may step by step be led to right conclusions. If our inductions be logical we may fall into as great error by an improper arrangement of our premises or propositions as by false reasoning.

It has not been intended here to controvert all the dogmas of free trade; we deem it only necessary to resist the use which is often made of them. When they are spread before the world as a remedy for existing social ills, as a solution of the main problems of social economy, we merely deny at present their application. So far as they are true they really form but one step in the adjustment of social industry, and it would be equally mischievous to assume any other step in that progress upon which to construct theories of social welfare. It might as well be pretended that money and credit were the starting-point of social doctrines as free trade.

The object of the foregoing remarks has not been to

present methodically and fully the Claims of Labor, but to awaken attention to their importance; it has not been to ask the reader's acceptance of ready-made theories or opinions, but to urge an earnest and conscientious study of a subject so deeply involving the interests of society and humanity. It is not to the interests of any department of industry that attention is invited, but to the personal claims of those who work for their own living, and furnish the living of those who do not labor,—of that large class which constitutes the productive power of a nation. However imperfectly these claims have been presented, some such ideas as the following must have occurred to those readers whose reflections have been in the least awakened.

The labor to be performed in any community is its most important public interest; but the welfare of the individuals who achieve that labor is of still greater importance. Life, limb, and property, are such special objects of protection by law, that the statute books teem with enactments having this design. When a life is lost by violence or accident, a special officer holds an inquiry to ascertain how, where, and by whom the evil has been done. When an assault on the person is committed, the offence is visited with indictment, fine, and imprisonment. When the right of property is violated, the remedies are manifold and applicable to every variety of case. The poor man's labor being equally as important to society and himself, should be equally protected by the laws, institutions, and usages of society. When men dependent for their living upon their labor can find no work though anxiously desiring it, their case is as worthy of special inquiry as any for which

the law can provide. As the laws, institutions, and usages of society now stand, men must sink for want of work to the condition of pauperism before their case secures official notice. Labor as a right and a property, is as fully entitled to proper consideration and constant protection as houses, lands, and merchandise, or as life and limb.

The difficulty of affording this protection is no excuse for not attempting it. Governments do not perform perfectly any of their functions. If the public authorities could do nothing in the case of unemployed labor and suffering laborers, beyond a searching inquiry into the causes, this would in due time indicate the true remedies. Laborers have as much right to work as to eat; it is a right they do not surrender on becoming members of society; and as it may be neither within the province nor the power of Government to secure the exercise of this right to individuals, it should be very careful neither directly nor indirectly to obstruct it. No Government can employ any considerable proportion of its population, but every Government can be careful to open and extend the avenues of industry. It may not enter upon, but it can both point out and promote the career of labor! And when that career is obstructed, it can immediately employ all the light of science and the highest social intelligence to ascertain the facts and suggest the cause and the remedies.

Every Government, whatever its form, should by its nature be paternal. It should hold its powers for the good of those over whom it is placed. This principle, whether declared in constitutions or admitted by sovereigns or not, is inevitably inherent in the Government

of every Christian country, for these men owe to each other without exception, the duty of kindness. Every constitution, law, or institution, is framed under the obligation of this law of kindness,—their object must be the public welfare and the well-being of individuals, and they should be construed as having this design. Where all the authority is vested in one person this law of kindness bears upon him with a force proportioned to his power of doing good. If this principle governs, whatever be the form of Government, the attention of the authorities would be strongly directed to the condition of the laboring masses, for the most part little above the condition of poverty, and demanding therefore, not only on public grounds, but on considerations of humanity, the utmost vigilance to see that nothing intervened to interrupt their labor or impair its effectiveness. Next to the preservation of the Government itself must be this duty of seeing that multitudes who live by their labor are watched over and protected in their rights, that their productive power is not needlessly wasted, and that they do not come to poverty or even temporary inaction, from any fault of the Government either of omission or commission.

If this regard for the interests of laborers were to obtain its proper place in the minds of public men, men of science, intelligence, and wealth, rapid progress would be made in ascertaining the extent and nature of the protection which is due to the cause of labor and the well-being of the largest class of persons in every nation.